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The Advantage of a good Name.

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A

SERMON

Preached at the FUNERAL of
Mr. *SIMON DU BOIS*
An Eminent PAINTER,

IN THE
Church of St. Paul's Covent-Garden,

May the 26th 1708.

By Peter Wagener Rector of Stisted in Essex.

L O N D O N,

Printed for *Daniel Browne* at the *Black Swan*
and *Bible* without *Temple-Bar*. 1708.

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30. JULY 1840

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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TO THE
Right Honourable
The Lord SOMERS
Baron of Evesham.

My Lord,

IN the Publishing of this Sermon I was not so vain as to imagine it would be of any Service to the Memory of the deceased, for that is already perpetuated, in his being known, and respected, by so great a Personage as your Lordship: But my Design was to shew my last Respects to so deserving a Friend, and declare to the World how much I am indebted to your Lordship. I must confess I am very proud of the Debt, and therefore shall lay hold of all Opportunities (tho' I could wish this had been later) to acknowledge it.

Art seems to be under an Eclipse by the Loss of so great a Master, but your Lordship is the most likely to restore her by the Honours you have shewn to the Pencil. Where Art and Integrity meet in the

Dedication.

the same Person, they shall not fail of your Acceptance.

H. T. O. T.

— Qui Vitam excoluere per Artes,
Quique sui Memores alios fecere merendo,
Omnibus his niveâ cinguntur tempora Vittâ
Virgil. Æneid. Lib. 6.

That your Lordship may long live the Ornament
and Support of the Learned World shall be the hearty
Prayer of

Your Most Obedient Servant.

Peter Wagener.

Ecclesiastes VII. v. 1.

*A good Name is better than precious Ointment,
and the Day of Death, than the Day of ones
Birth.*

THE Preacher in the foregoing Chapter, having shown the Folly and Vanity of Mankind, both in Respect to the Knowledge, and Enjoyment of sublunary Things, proceeds in this and the following Chapters, to give us an Account of something more substantial, as the most proper Means to obviate that Vexation of Spirit, which is the natural Result of Folly: And among the several Remedies that might be thought of, he begins with a good Name, which he tells us is better than precious Ointment, and the Day of Death, which is better than the Day of ones Birth: In which Comparison of a good Name with precious Ointment, he gives us to understand, that it is infinitely preferable before any Enjoyments of this Life, though the most innocent and desirable. *As Proverbs, 22. 1. A good Name is rather to be chosen than great Riches.*

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In discoursing upon which Words, I shall keep to these Two Propositions, as they are laid down in my Text. First, That a good Name is infinitely preferable before any Enjoyments of this Life, though the most innocent and desirable. 2ly, That the Day of Death, is better than the Day of ones Birth. 3ly, and lastly, I shall conclude with some suitable Applications.

To begin with the first, a good Name is to be prefer'd to any Enjoyments of this Life. Upon these following Considerations. First, It has this peculiar Advantage, that it is founded upon Virtue, it is as a House built upon a Rock, it is the Reward of Integrity, of an inoffensive Life, of exemplary Goodness, which breaks through and shines in the black and most cloudy Scenes of Darkness, for the World was never yet so totally degenerate, so universally debauched, but that Virtue still had some for it's Votaries ; it commands a tacit Esteem and Veneration from bad Men, as having something or other in it, that the worst of them will pretend to. *The Path of the Righteous* (says the wise Man, *Prov. 4. 18.*) *is as a shining Light that shineth more and more unto*

unto the Perfect Day. (i. e.) The Actions, the whole Tenor of his Life is such, that they will stand the Test, and the Scrutiny that the World shall make, will add more to the Brightness of his Character. A Man (it is true) may so manage the Vizard, and play the Hypocrite, as to pass for a harmless and well-meaning Person, but I believe it is beyond Art for a Man to carry on the Delusion so, as to gain the general Reputation of a good and exemplary Christian ; for there are some Virtues so peculiar to this Character, that they are not to be found in any other, but such Persons only, as act upon a Principle of Faith and Charity. Those who are so ready to thank God they have done no harm, are at a stand, when you come to ask them what good they have done ; and you may take this for a certain Rule, that he who appears in a Disguise, never acts designedly against his own Interest. St. Paul in his 5th to the *Romans*, tells us, scarcely for a righteous Man will one dye, yet peradventure for a good Man, some would even dare to die. Which Distinction, I take to be this, though the Words are promiscuously used. The Original Δ ι χ α γ righteous or just falls short of ἀ χ α θ ος good, for the former of

these in the strictest Sense signifies no more than one who acts ~~as it is law~~ according to Law, a moral Man, who just makes shift to confine himself within the limits of Equity: But the latter signifies a real good, a charitable, a merciful, a useful Man, and one that has deserv'd well of the Age he has liv'd in, who has signaliz'd himself in something more than what the Precepts of common Morality oblige him to, not only a strict but holy Person, in a Word, a Christian, and such as will be missed when he is gone, whose Life if it was possible to save, peradventure some would even dare to dye. This Man's Life you may safely conclude is not the Shadow, but the Substance of Virtue, because he acts upon a higher Principle, than that of Nature. Now, whatever Esteem and Respect we shew either to the Person or Memory of such Men, is their indisputed Right, and our Duty, because we are equally obliged to reverence Virtue and detest Vice: For Goodness alone is what renders Mankind truly honourable, this alone is the Delight of the intellectual World, and what advances us to a Communion of the Divine Nature. But 2ly, A good Name is to be preferr'd, because it is harder to come by, than the other good

Things

Things of this Life: We are often born to Titles as well as Estates; and if we are born to neither, yet Time and Chance may bring us to both: One Man may be promoted to Honour, that never had a Principle of any, another may meet with an Estate, who deserv'd a Gibbet, but it never happen'd that any Man had a good Name with good People, who deserv'd a bad one. 'Tis what we are not born to, but instructed in, and however strong our Desire may be after it, yet meer Nature is too weak to make out our Merit. We must carry an even hand to have every ones good Word, and this as we find by Experience, is no such easy Task; for there must be an admirable Temper and Frame of Mind that can condescend to every Capacity of human Life, that can guard it self against Offences, so as neither to give nor take any; there must be a Sweetness in our Aspect, which bespeaks us merciful, and a Largeness of Soul to make us charitable; and these are such Embellishments, that they are not the Effect of Years, but Institution; not the Gifts of Nature, but of Grace. For in most of the Christian Virtues which recommend us to the Favor and Esteem of good Men, we act for a con-
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siderable Time against our Inclinations. But 3ly, As a good Name is hard to come by, so if lost, it is harder to be regained : A Man of an establish'd Reputation has the Eyes of the World upon him, and as every one knows his good Deeds, so they will his bad ones ; now one bad Action spoils a Thousand good ones, and puts the World upon finding out Faults they never thought of. And how difficult it is for a Man, who has forfeited his Reputation, to repair his Credit, appears from this, that the best of his Endeavours for the future are liable to Suspicion, the more unexpected any thing is, the greater is the Impression it makes, and nothing is more surprizing than notable Miscarriages in a Man of an extraordinary Character, but the Loss of other Things, however great, may be repaired, a good Name may recover Riches, but not Riches a good Name ; one Friend when he is gone, may leave his Equal, and a States-man that is under a Cloud, upon a Change of Politicks may be in greater Request than ever ; but an After-reputation seldom or never comes up to it's former Character. But 4ly, As it is more difficult to come by, so it is of greater Service than any other good Things of this Life.

It

It is profitable to a Man himself, and to others, to the Age he now lives in, and that of Posterity ; and above all to himself in a future State. And first it is profitable to a Man himself in this World, I know no better Expedient, whereby he may live easy and comfortably, it is what gives him the best Prospect of making himself honestly rich, because we are willing to deal with those we think our selves secure with. Besides, such a Man has this Advantage, that he is the better secured against the Violence of wicked Men. A good Name has many Friends, and he that will injure such a Person, is sure to make himself many Enemies. For a good Man some would even dare to dye, much more will they take his Part. If the Law is engag'd to protect a Transgressor, much more is it a righteous Person. Who is he that will harm you, says St. Peter, if ye be Followers of that which is good ? But further, as he is secured against the Violence of wicked Men, so also is he free from the Disquiets of a wounded Spirit, as he has a good Report of all Men, so of the Truth it self ; as his Virtues are answerable to his Character, so the Peace of his Conscience is proportionable to the Sincerity of his Heart, and the State of his

his Health, correspondent to the Peace of his Mind, for says the wise Man, *Prov. 15. 30.* *The Light of the Eyes rejoiceth the Heart, and a good Report maketh the Bones fat.* Not the Harp nor the Viol, not the Wine nor the fatted Calf, neither the precious Ointment, nor Aromatick Spice can so asswage and mitigate the Toils of human Breasts as an unblemish'd Name. But again, as it is profitable to himself, so it is also to others, to the Age he now lives in, and to that of Posterity. A good Man, a Man of an unspotted Reputation is a Blessing to the Age he lives in. It was a great and just Complaint of the Psalmists, *Psalm. 12. 1.* *That the Godly were ceased, and the Faithful diminished from among the Children of Men.* The Pillars of the Earth may be said to be shaken, when the Righteous are taken away ; for there is nothing that tends more to a national Reformation, than good Example ; the Directions of Precept and Instruction are of little Weight without this, for this is the Life and Soul of Virtue, there is nothing that so overrules the Passions of Men ; for Nature has implanted in our Souls an Emulation of Virtue, which consists not only of an Approbation, but also of a Desire to imitate that which is

good,

good, and this Desire is proportionably inflam'd to that Reputation Virtue meets with in the World; for that must be a mean and narrow Soul that is not provok'd by Example; since Nature has done her Part, and furnish'd reasonable Souls with the same active Powers, that Man is inexcusable that will not stir up the Gift that is in him. The Patriarchs, the great St. *Paul*, the rest of the Apostles were Men of like Passions with us, yet they were shining and burning Lights, they were the Off-spring of God, so are we, *Act*s 17. They through Faith subdued Kingdoms, wrought Righteousness, obtained Promises, stopped the Mouths of Lions, quenched the Violence of Fire, escaped the Edge of the Sword, out of Weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in Fight, turned to flight the Armies of the Aliens, they obtained this Report, that the World was not worthy of them; and shall not such Examples stir us up to distinguish our selves by some remarkable and heroick Instances of Christian Virtue? Such Men as these are the tutelar Guardians of a wicked World, for as the Cry of our Sins, so the Report of good Actions reaches Heaven, Virtue is known with God and with Men, when it is present

sent Men take Example at it, and when it is gone they desire it. *Wisdom, c. 4.* But above all, a good Name is profitable to a Man in a future State, there the Widow, and the Orphan, and the reclaimed Sinner shall plead his Cause, there the Prayers of the hungry Soul shall appear upon record, there the Blessings of the needy shall rest upon him. But ~~sly~~, a good Name is of a longer Duration than the other good Things of this Life, Riches change their Masters, Families may be extinct, Pleasures glut the Senses, and the best and longest Life has but a few Days, but a good Name endures for ever, Pillars of Brass, Monuments of Marble are subject to Fate, but by this we survive our selves, and being dead, yet speak, *Heb. 11. 4. Psal. 112. The Memory of the Just is blessed, but the Name of the Wicked shall rot.* Whatever Alterations Corruption may make in these frail Bodies, yet the embalmed Memory of good Men shall smell sweet to everlasting Ages; for Virtue wears a Crown, and triumphs for ever, having gotten the Victory striving for undefil'd Rewards, which brings me to my Second Proposition I promis'd to speak to, *that the Day of Death is better than the Day of ones Birth.* The Connection of which, with

with the former, is thus, better is the Day of Death, when a Man shall die with a good Name, than the Day of his Birth when he was born to Misery, and Vanity. Death is the last boundary of Things, and for ever seals us up in the State it found us. So that that Man whose Life has gained him an unspotted Reputation, a good Report, by Death has it secured and established to him beyond all Possibility of loosing it, there's no Danger in the Grave of a false Step, neither Hope nor Fear, neither Pleasure nor Pain, neither Men nor Devils can alter his Purpose. He may say with St. Paul, *I have fought the good Fight, I have finished my Course, henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness*, in the Grave, he rests from his Labours, and his Works follow him. But Man, when he is born into the World, is born unto Troubles, as the Sparks fly upwards, he is born like the wild Asses Colt, led on by a brutish Instinct of corrupt Nature, dull and slow in apprehending good, so that in the best Dispositions, it is some considerable Time, before they are capable of forming any tolerable Notions of Happiness, or before we can judge whether they will prove wise or foolish. And then afterwards, when we are

come to a Ripeness of Thought, and have our Reason furnish'd with the best Instructions, yet even then we are so guided by Sense and Passion, so over-ruled by bad Example and Custom, that it is long before we effectually practice what we know, all which while an over-fond Regard to Life, which is inconsistent with true Virtue, is what puts us upon irregular Measures; whereas did we look more to our End, and the Name we are to leave behind us, we should never be prevail'd upon to act and suffer so basely as we do. The Opinion the People of *Thrace* had of the Folly and Calamity of human Life, was the Reason as the Historian tells us, of observing their coming into the World with Tears, but their going out of it with Joy and Mirth, that they might remove that Weakness of Mind which betrayed Mankind into such base Practices. *Val. Max.*

Lib. 2. c. 6. Well then, may that Man deserve the Name of a good and faithful Servant, of a skilful Pilot, who has steer'd his Course through the dangerous Streights of this wicked World to his eternal Haven, who having escaped the Pollutions of Lust, patiently resigns his humble Spirit into the Hands of him that gave it. Not the Pleasures, not the Riches,

not

not the Honours of this World, not a good Name it self (if it were in his Choice) wou'd prevail with him to repossess his earthly Tabernacle, and once more hazard that Reputation that is out of Danger, and cost him so many Struggles. To depart and be with Christ is far better ; in that State, Flesh and Spirit end their Strife there. Immortal Trophies shall be rais'd to the Honour of the victorious Christian, and the Banners of the Cross shall be display'd in eternal Triumph.

And now Thirdly and lastly, To apply what has been said, since human Life is made up of so much Folly, and Man at his best State is but Vanity, since of all Enjoyments there is nothing durable, nothing solid but the Satisfaction of having liv'd well, and the Merit of a good Name. It is the highest and only Prudence in us, to consult those Things which conduce to so noble an End, for this answers our most unbounded Desires, and shall live as long as we live our selves. The longest Life without this, is but an idle Dream, and it must needs be a very uncomfortable one, which, to our dying Day, will be reflected upon. It is but a melancholy and bad Life that makes a Man

Man afraid of his Death, the longer he lives, the worse it is with him, for as he prolongs his Days, he adds to the Number and Weight of his Sins.

His Life is but the Prelude of future Miseries, for when he should rest from Sorrows, he begins them, if then we would have Rest to our Souls, be deliver'd from the Bondage of Corruption, into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God, and rais'd out of the Dust of Forgetfulness, where all Things but our Sins are forgotten. If we would have our Names written in Heaven, we must have that Respect for our selves, as to value our Reputation above Life it self, otherwise it will be in the Power of every seeming Danger, to beat us from the Post of Virtue. And Life is no longer worth the keeping, when it cannot be maintain'd with Integrity. Therefore, whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report, if there be any Virtue and any Praise think on these Things, *Phl. 4.8. v. 8.*

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I should now have done, but that the Memory of that good Man, whose Relicks lie before us, is not to be forgotten. As he was very well known to me, so it is expected I should give some Account of his Character. Mr. Simon Dubois, was by Birth a Hollander, and descended of a reputable Family, he had the Advantage of a liberal Education, but his Genius chiefly led him to that noble and admired Art of Painting, which he proved by an indefatigable Application, and his Travels into Italy. He had a true Relish of the Italian Style, and expressed it in his own Composures, for which he was in great Esteem with the Italian Princes. He valued his Art above Riches, that what he left of his Works might be serviceable to Posterity, he was respected here by the most honourable Personages, as a most judicious and experienc'd Master. *Seest thou a Man, says Solomon, Prov. 22. 29. diligent in his Business, he shall stand before Kings, he shall not stand before mean Men.* Look upon the Rainbow, says the Son of Sirach, 43. 11. and praise him that made it. View the Works of this accomplish'd Master, and they shall lead thee to the Knowledge of the invisible God. As for his Temper, there was no less a Sweetness

ness in that than in his Paintings. He was of a courteous and affable, of a mild and charitable Disposition, he delivered the Poor that cryed, and the Fatherless, and him that had none to help him, and he caused the Widow's Heart to sing for Joy. Job 29. 12. His own Expences were frugal, that he might be liberal to those that wanted it. *A good Man sheweth favor and lendeth.* Ps. 112. 3. His Opinion (as to Religion) was Orthodox, he was a most constant frequenter of the establish'd Church, and left a grateful Legacy to the Poor of this Parish. His last Hours in which I visited him, were employ'd in divine Soliloquies, and his Ejaculations were full of Zeal and Seraphick Warmth. His Age exceeded the common Span, and yet his Life was not so long, but that his Friends could have wished it longer, he did good in his Generation, and now he's gone, he has left a good Name behind him, which made the Day of Death better than the Day of his Birth.



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